



## **Council of Military Education Committees of the Universities of the United Kingdom**

### **Executive Committee Meeting**

**held on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021 from 1130hrs to 1400hrs at Halton House,  
RAF Halton, Wendover, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, HP22 5PG.**

### **Minute**

#### **Present**

General Sir P Wall (President); Mr J S Castle (Chairman); Dr M Vilnay (Vice-Chair);  
Rev Professor J P Taylor (Treasurer); Ms C Kinhead; Professor M Siva-Jothy; Dr J  
Smith; Maj I Stoney; Gp Capt I Sharrocks; Col D Gray; Capt N Downing RN;

#### **In Attendance**

Mr J Norris (Secretary); Wg Cdr M Dewer; Lt Cdr M Bannister

#### **Apologies**

Mrs S Bedford; Dr R Hall; Professor P Ivey; Mr A Smith; Col N Cheshire; Lt Col M  
Bishop

- NOTED: The Chairman thanked the RAF for hosting the conference and to all colleagues involved in the organisation.
- NOTED: The Chairman congratulated Capt N Downing for promotion to Captain on behalf of COMEC. Capt N Downing noted he will be staying in his current role until November 2021 until a formal replacement is confirmed. Lt Cdr M Bannister will support the transition meantime.

#### **1. Minutes**

- APPROVED: The Minutes of the Executive meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2021 (COMEC\_Exec\_2021\_09\_A1)

#### **2. Matters Arising**

- CONSIDERED: Any matters or action points arising (COMEC\_Exec\_2021\_09\_A2)

Matters Arising (Min 2 24 June 2021)

- **ACTION: An initial working party including the Chairman, Vice-Chair, Treasurer, Secretary and Professor M Siva-Jothy to be convened to start reviewing the COMEC Constitution and MEC Terms of Reference.**
- RESOLVED: The other noted actions in the Chairman's report will be taken forward through the current and upcoming COMEC Executive meetings through the agendas.
- RESOLVED: The Chairman requested the Executive continue to share bullet points with the Secretary on MEC meetings so these can be collated.

Briefing on Army Engagement with Universities (Min 3 24 June 2021)

- **ACTION: The Chairman requested Professor P Ivey, Ms C Kinkead and the Treasurer investigate HE engagement further with the Army Engagement Group once Maj R O Wilson's replacement is in post. Ms C Kinkead will report at the November meeting,**

Internationalisation Opportunity for COMEC (Min 5 24 June 2021)

- RESOLVED: Ms C Kinkead to have an offline chat with the Chairman and colleagues on research assessment and send ideas and issues to the Secretary. This information would then be made available before a vote on the proposal. The Chairman noted Ms C Kinkead had joined the 5-Eyes Executive group which will support this activity.

Reports from the Service Staff Officers (Min 7 24 June 2021)

- **ACTION: The Chairman requested a working group be formed to discuss widening AFC University membership and Col D Gray, Cdr N Downing and the Chairman will meet to discuss further. The Chairman noted he will organise and report back.**

COMEC Prize (Min 9 24 June 2021)

- **ACTION: The Chairman requested the COMEC Prize criteria be discussed at the November COMEC meeting with specific input from the Service Staff Officers. The current criteria will be circulated with the agenda.**

### **3. Chairman's Report**

- RECEIVED: An Executive Summary from the Chairman (COMEC\_Exec\_2021\_09\_B)

#### ***Chairman's Report***

*I am going to keep this short. Whilst COMEC business continues, the main focus of the next couple of days is about the Conference and I do not want to detract from that. To this end, please find a bulleted list of activities/landmarks, with a few thoughts and comments thrown in:-*

- **“5 Minutes”**

*I have been in post as Chairman, precisely one year, yet it seems like a mere few minutes. For me, this is usually a sign, that I am enjoying myself. Not in a, feet up, beer in hand kind of way, but as someone who enjoys challenges and finding practical solutions.*

- **The Conference Team**

*Huge thanks to Gp Capt Ian Sharrocks and his team and our own COMEC Sub, comprising Carol, Margi and Jason. They have managed, (through Covid) to put on something I hope you will find both enjoyable and thought-provoking. Needless to say, the Sub have not allowed me to do nothing. I am writing this, plus thinking up a Con Title, writing my bio’ (which makes it an autobio’) and a few other things.*

- **5-Eyes**

*We are in the early stages of discussions regards the integration of COMEC into this international community. Carol and I have been speaking to their Chairman and a plan of action has been brought about for the mutual benefit of most importantly, the Veterans, Families and Armed Forces Community that we all serve as allies plus COMEC and 5-Eyes. I continue to engage with 5-Eyes as a whole and on an individual basis.*

- **ToR’s**

*A small SubC has been established to examine COMEC ToR’s. This will be expanded to see how MEC ToR’s fit into the wider picture.*

- **Continued discussions**

*Conversations continue within the MEC Chairs’ Forum. Chairs are encouraged to attend or send an MEC representative, where they are unable. Next meeting, there will be a single agenda item to discuss development of ToR’s. MEC Chairs are encouraged to examine what they have and consider what (if any) changes may/need to be made.*

*Finally, I am looking forward to meeting you all in person. I look to everyone to contribute and in this way, make it memorable.*

*Whilst falling case numbers suggest this may be unnecessary, I would be prepared to have a Lateral Flow Test before you arrive. This is something that may be required by our hosts. DIY kit free from Chemists, and from personal experience, dead easy (apart from the “gagging”).*

*Thank you  
Jim C*

- NOTED: The Chairman noted he had talked with UCLAN and their links to the military. They are not currently linked to an MEC so they were looking to see which MEC would best represent them.
- NOTED: The Chairman noted recent discussions with the Director of the Defence College for Military Capability Integration and noted COMECs intent to work more closely together in future.

- **ACTION: The Secretary to write out to MECs to confirm which Universities are affiliated to them and create a map for the COMEC website.**

#### **4. Treasurer's Report**

- RECEIVED: An Executive Summary from the Treasurer (COMEC\_Exec\_2021\_09\_C)
- NOTED: The Treasurer noted that two MECs have subscription payments outstanding although expect to receive payment shortly.
- **ACTION: The Treasurer noted a surplus this year due to the pandemic and reduced travel. The Treasurer expects this will revert back to a managed deficit noting current policy to reduce reserves. The Chairman requested a review of the policy to reduce reserves and would like to discuss at a later meeting.**
- APPROVED: The Treasurer noted the ongoing difficulty of collecting subscription payments due to the difference and complexity of each University and MEC and how they process invoices. It was agreed that MEC Chairs and Secretaries should take ownership of the processing of these invoices, and liaise with the appropriate finance offices to ensure the payment is made.
- NOTED: The Chairman noted that Brighton / Sussex will link to another MEC in future to ensure continued representation and that he will need to discuss this with Southampton MEC (who have opted out of linking to COMEC). Major I Stoney noted many MECs are centred around ancient Universities making it challenging for the newer Universities to be properly represented. The Chairman noted this needs to be linked to Armed Forces Covenant.

#### **5. Reports from the Service Staff Officers**

- RECEIVED: An Executive Summary from each of the Service Staff Officers:
  - a. Royal Navy (COMEC\_Exec\_2021\_09\_D1)

*17 Aug 21*

*COMEC Executive*

***COMEC Executive Meeting: 1 Sep 21 – URNU REPORT***

#### ***Introduction***

*1. Face to Face (F2F) activity in-line with HMG directives re-commenced across the University Royal Naval Units (URNU) Q2/3 21. However, the re-start plan was complicated by local circumstances and subtly different Road Maps being followed by the devolved administrations.*

2. *The Units continue to work collaboratively within their regions, and with the Universities Department at BRNC, in order to place the Welfare Duty of Care (WDoC) of both OCs and staff at the centre of their planning.*
3. *The personnel situation within the URNU Organisation is improving with the majority of Command and all Coxswain positions due to be filled in Q3 21.*

### **Command Climate**

4. *To deliver against BRNC Command's mandated outputs and priorities, the Universities Department continues to strive to guarantee:*
  - *a safe and secure environment;*
  - *a respectful, inclusive, empowering & professional working environment;*
  - *an atmosphere where honesty, openness & reasonable challenge flourishes;*
  - *a strong safety culture led by intelligent risk management; and*
  - *a strong community spirit looking after the URNU family.*

### **Priorities**

5. *In line with Capt BRNC's intent, Commander Universities (Cdr U) is working with the URNU Commanding Officers (COs) to deliver the priorities set for the Universities Department for Term 21-3:*
  - a. *Deliver reformed URNU Training Cadre concept by Oct 21.*
  - b. *Roll out of IOC Training Syllabus to all URNU by Oct 21.*
  - c. *Successfully bring URNU Belfast and URNU East Midlands to IOC by 1 Oct 21.*
  - d. *Successfully initiate Virtual URNU pilot with IOC of 1 Nov 21.*
6. *Looking ahead, as some degree of normality returns, the Universities Department will also endeavour to complete the following priority tasks in the medium term:*
  - a. *Implement and imbed URNU Syllabus 2021.*
  - b. *Return to Business as Usual (BAU) Q4 21.*

### **Training Delivery**

7. *Despite the extension of many CV-19 related restrictions, F2F training recommenced in Q2 taking into consideration differences across the devolved administrations. The training year was extended so that OCs / TOs / staff were able to continue to interact and regain on some of the training opportunities missed earlier in the year, by utilising a blended approach to training delivery.*

8. *Approximately 80 OCs embarked on ships from the Coastal Forces Squadron to participate in a reduced Summer Deployment programme, based in UK coastal waters. While a Summer Camp at URNU Cambridge trialled the new peer enablers initiative and provided in excess of 90 OCs, from 13 out of 15 units, with the opportunity to participate in a range of water-based activities at the organisation's new RYA Inshore Boating Station. OCs also participated in dockyard, air station and ships visits. Additionally, a significant number were able to build on the skills that they had acquired during lockdown on Narrow Boats on the Birmingham Shipping Canal.*

9. *The URNU Sports Competition was progressed during Q3 and it is hoped that a larger residential event can be staged early in Q4 21. Two URNU teams will compete in the Dartmouth Royal Regatta in Aug 21, while a team of 10 cyclists with support staff will ride from Lands End to John O'Groats in support of RNRMC in Sep 21.*

10. *The continuous professional development programme designed to professionalise the Training Cadre continues to roll out with the first Initial Training Officers Course being successfully delivered to 12 newly recruited TOs.*

11. *The URNU Summer Training Conference brought together 75 training personnel from all 15 units for the formal launch of URNU Syllabus 21 and the supporting reflective Learning Log. The new syllabus, which is aligned to the Maritime Reserve Initial Naval Training (Officer) Phase 1A and 1B, has been ratified by the Training Requirement Authority and is due to reach Initial Operating Capability (IOC) in Oct 21.*

#### **Welfare Duty of Care (WDoC)**

12. *At this difficult time, the need for WDoC to take primacy has been clearly identified. Each individual continues to be encouraged to considering how they can contribute to the mental and physical well-being of their colleagues. The permanent staff at unit level continue to signpost OCs, for whom they have concerns, to University Welfare Services, while additional risk mitigation measures have been investigated and implemented. Each unit now has a trained Mental Health First Aider in place, while progress has been made in identifying link RN / RNR Chaplains for each region.*

#### **URNU Root & Branch Review.**

13. *The transformational change required in the short / medium term, to imbed the recommendations of the 2\* mandated root and branch review is progressing on schedule. BRNC Command is therefore confident that the changes that have already been implemented, and are currently being imbedded, will ensure that the URNU organisation is ready to support the Royal Navy as it transforms to meet the needs of the nation.*

14. *Over the last fifteen months, URNU Permanent Staff and TOs have made significant progress in delivering outcomes within the five key Workstream (WS) areas: Governance;*

*Training Syllabus; Administration; Training Delivery and Business Continuity<sup>1</sup>. These WS align with the URNU Organisation's core functions and recognise the fact that the organisation must evolve and transform while delivering BAU to the existing cadre of OCs.*

*For situational awareness, the progress which has been made since the last COMEC Executive meeting is outlined below.*

## **15. Governance.**

*a. University Department Standing Orders v2.0, incorporating an updated Chapter on the URNU Training Cadre and a new section relating to Medical / Dental Cadets will be published in Oct 21. A further section relating to the management of RN Defence STEM Undergraduate Scheme (DSUS) Bursars is currently under development.*

*b. The new URNU Mission Statement has been adopted by all units and now forms part of the URNU offer to its members:*

*'To inspire individuals through leadership and maritime training, whilst facilitating a career in the Royal Navy for those who choose.'*

*c. **Regionalisation.** In order to streamline the operating model and provide ongoing support with domestic engagement, the URNU regions will align with Naval Regional Commands (NRC) with effect from Sep 21.*

*d. **URNU Transformation.** The geographical laydown of the URNU organisation has been reviewed taking into consideration distribution of eligible Potential OCs. The delivery of the SofS for Defence endorsed URNU Transformation Plan<sup>2</sup> is progressing as planned with significant progress made in the following areas:*

*(1) URNU Southampton and URNU Sussex merge to form URNU Solent within HMNB Portsmouth with an IOC of Sep 21.*

*(2) Work to form URNU Belfast is on schedule with suitable accommodation identified within HMS Hibernia, Thiepval Barracks in Lisburn. An interim CO is in place however the positions of CO and Coxn have been advertised and are likely to be filled by 1 Oct 21. A Senior Training Officer has been selected and three further TOs will be appointed in due course.*

*(3) URNU East Midlands will form part of the Joint Command pilot with the CO of URNU Manchester leading on the formation of the new Unit. A MoU is currently being drafted to facilitate the establishment of the Unit at Forester House in Nottingham. The position of STO has been advertised while recruitment to other TO positions is underway.*

<sup>1</sup> UTM 18/20 – Establishment of Workstreams to deliver University Royal Naval Units Review

<sup>2</sup> MinLords-PrivateOffice@mod.gov.uk\_20210610\_RE: 20210511-Optimisation of South Coast URNU Estate MinSub-OS

e. *The Virtual URNU pilot endorsed by BRNC Command has been initiated. Expressions of interest have been received from a number of potential recruits who will be interviewed in the coming weeks. This pilot will exploit the lessons learnt during the pandemic while substantially increasing the reach of the organisation.*

## **15. Training Syllabus.**

a. *URNU Syllabus 2021, which is aligned to the RNR's Initial Naval Training (Officer) syllabus, takes account of the lessons learnt during the pilot and will reach IOC in Oct 21. Similar to the interim package, the new syllabus is based on four learning pillars, to which OCs will be exposed throughout their time in the URNU.*

- (1) *Militarisation.*
- (2) *Marinisation.*
- (3) *Command, Leadership and Management.*
- (4) *Adventurous Training & Sport.*

b. *The appropriateness of the new syllabus will continue to be monitored prior to reaching FOC in Sep 22. It aspires to deliver an enriched training experience, in a blended fashion, through enhanced learning opportunities designed to improve the likelihood of the long-term retention of individuals within the wider Naval family.*

16. **Training Delivery.** *During the course of the review, the vital role of the URNU Training Officer has been considered and evaluated. Whilst these individuals are List 7A reserve officers their TACOS are unique as they have no call out liability and are regarded as civilians in eyes of the law. However, the vital role that they play in the development of URNU OCs and the overall management of each URNU has now been recognised. The overarching mantra of: Recruit; Train; Retain; Recognise, has been fully adopted while a long-awaited through career professional development strategy has now been implemented.*

## **Recruitment Strategy**

17. *The URNU Webpages, that are hosted within the official RN website, have been refreshed to take account of the transformational changes within the organisation. (See Annex A). This year, building on the success of last year's virtual recruiting campaign, the URNU organisation will continue to utilise a wide range of social media platforms to drive interested individuals to the website, where they can submit expression of interest. This approach is assessed, to significantly broadening the organisation's virtual footprint, while reducing its reliance on campus F2F interactions.*

## **Personnel**



18. *During Q3 21, there will be a high level of churn within the URNU Organisation:*
- a. *URNU Cambridge Coxn position filled by WO2 S Blake RM - wef 1 Sep 21.*
  - b. *URNU Devon Coxn position filled by CPO C Harris RN - wef 1 Sep 21.*
  - c. *URNU Glasgow Coxn position filled by MAA R Junor RN - wef 1 Aug 21. CO proceeds on draft without relief - 20 Sep 21.*
  - d. *URNU London Coxn position filled by C/Sgt A Breen RM - wef 1 Sep 21. CO position filled by Lt J Cuddeford RN - wef 5 Jul 21.*
  - e. *URNU Manchester Coxn position filled by CPO G Triffitt RN - wef 2 Sep 21. CO position filled by Lt J Cuddeford RN - wef 5 Jul 21.*
  - f. *URNU Oxford Coxn position filled by CPO T Pring RN - wef 1 Sep 21.*
  - g. *URNU Northumbria CO position filled by Lt F Maddock-Greene - wef 25 Sep.*
  - h. *URNU Yorkshire CO position filled by Lt F Maddock-Greene - wef 7 Sep 21.*

**Summary**

19. *The URNU Organisation is emerging from the CV-19 pandemic in a much stronger position, as a result of the root and branch review and the lessons learnt during this challenging period. The Secretary of State endorsed Transformation Plan enables the URNU to exploit identified opportunities while ensuring value for money.*

20. *The new academic year will bring known, as well as unforeseen challenges, but I am confident that the URNU Organisation as a whole is ready to deliver the URNU offer to new and existing members.*



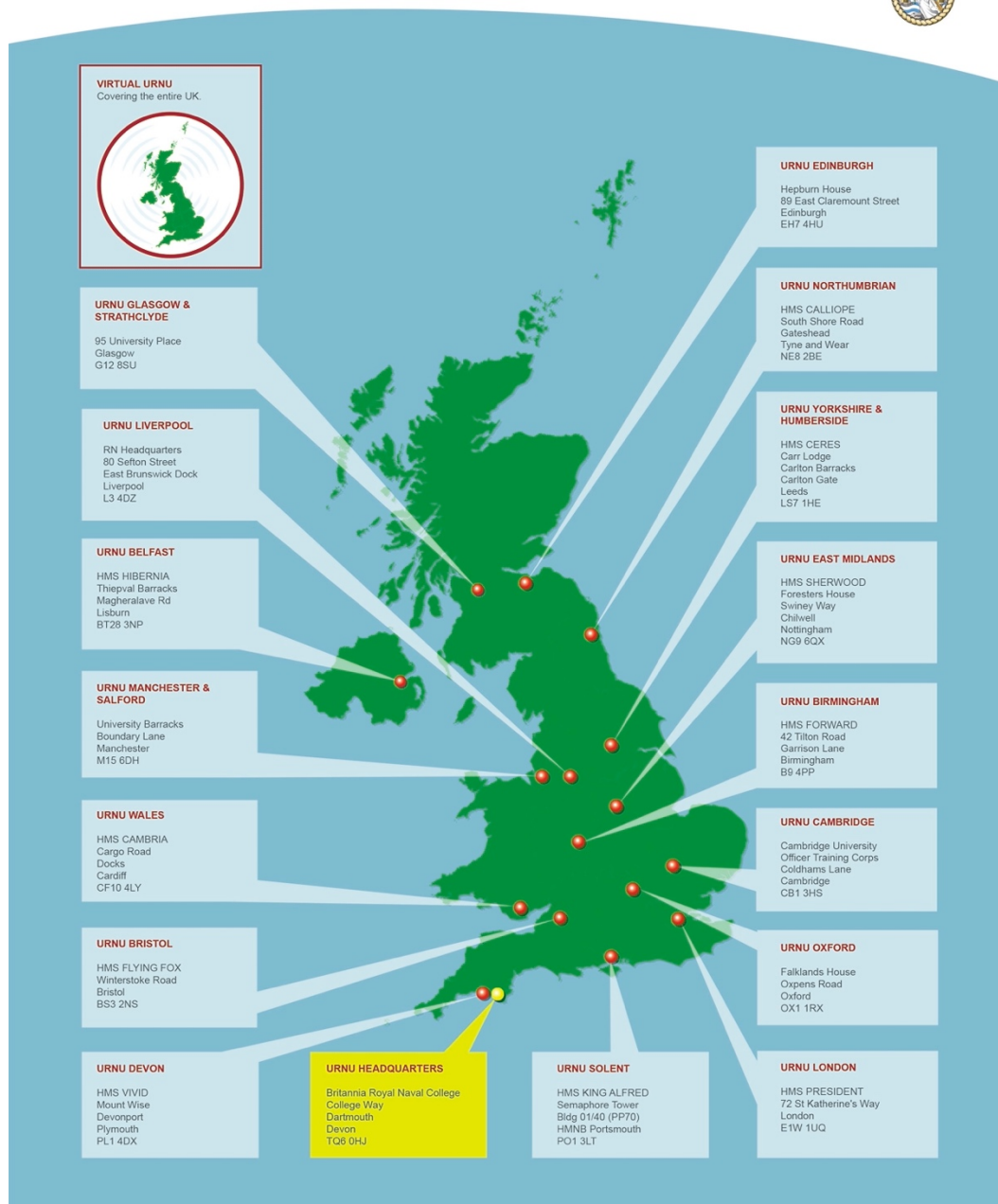
*N E Downing  
Cdr RN  
Commander Universities*

**Annex A to  
COMEC Executive Meeting: 1 Sep 21 – URNU REPORT  
Dated 17 Aug 21.**

**URNU Locations (Oct 21)**

# Britannia Royal Naval College

University Royal Naval Units' Headquarters



- NOTED: The Chairman noted that the focus on welfare and duty of care is welcome as a high priority. Capt N Downing noted mental health and care important and all units have mental health first aiders, however GDPR issues remain between USUs and Universities. Ms C Kinkead asked about training of mental first aiders in units and Capt N Downing noted training was internal and their objective was to signpost rather than deal with the issue themselves.
- b. Army (COMEC\_Exec\_2021\_09\_D2)

G3/COMEC SITREP/RMAS/Aug21

3 Aug 21

### **UNIVERSITY OFFICER TRAINING CORPS – COMEC REPORT JUNE 2021**

**1. Commander OTC overview.** *Despite a complex Covid-19 operating environment, UOTCs have completed their Annual Deployment Exercises (ADX) with just over 2000 OCdts deploying around the UK, focussing on completing their Module A and Module B training. Through summer recess, OCdts and staff will participate in military familiarisation events, adventure training, personal development training and civil engagement events. Upon our return in September, UOTCs will focus their efforts on the virtual and physical recruitment and selection events in order to attract sufficient numbers into training.*

**2. G1.** *UOTC funded OCdt establishment remains at 2570, although the number currently on held strength exceeds 3300. This number will decline as OCdts graduate and transfer to Army Reserve units, join the Regular Army or embark upon the start of their civilian careers. Planning is in place for the new recruitment activities and the intention is to attract ca. 6000 expressions of interest with an anticipated inflow of 1400 new OCdts.*

**3. G5. Recruitment plans.** *A successful business case has enabled a commercial partnership with TONIC – a media company. With their assistance, our campaign for 21/22 will focus on penetrating the target market audience in a concerted campaign designed to attract a greater diversity amongst the new cohort. A sustained social media campaign will run up to A-Level (and equivalent), which will be bolstered afterwards with “Live” social media events, sprint campaigns (highlighting the benefits of joining UOTCs) and viral advertising. The focus is on the student and the opportunities for personal development. There will still be limited participation in Freshers Fairs and physical attraction events.*

**4. G5. Medical plans.** *Finances remain taut and fewer medicals will be conducted in 22/22. Planning sees approximately 1945 entry standard medicals, distributed across the UOTCs, compared to 2205 in 20/21 and 2456 in 19/20. Despite reductions in overall*

*number of medicals, the improvement in process and pre-screening has reduced the failure rate and numbers remain buoyant; 1486 attestations in 20/21, 1530 in 19/20 and 1592 in 18/19. Noting the reduction in official establishment to 2570 in 2019 drove down required numbers.*

4. **G7 Training.** *UOTCs used the ADX season (May – June) to ensure maximum completion of modular training. COVID imposed a number of complicating factors and the need for rigorous Force Health Protection. Despite stringent adherence, two UOTCs (Exeter and Southampton) were forced to terminate their ADX early and the remainder were severely curtailed in activities. However, approximately 2500 students and staff deployed and significant numbers passed Modules A or B allowing them to progress into the next year. Despite the required focus on military activity the OCdts were exposed to as much engaging activity across as broad a spectrum as possible. RMAS Gp HQ will assess any shortfall in Modular pass rates due to Covid and may authorise additional training activity to address any shortfall.*

4. **G7 Other Training (AT).** *The constraint on UOTCs for activity to remain within the UK for calendar year 2021 remains, however UOTCs have an ambitious programme of UK based AT; including parachuting, canoe and kayak expeditions to the Lake District, coastal sailing around the UK and a wide range of mountaineering and walking.*

5. **G8 Finance.** *The financial position remains difficult across Defence and UOTCs still remain subject to close scrutiny. £8,448,891 has been allocated in Reserve Service Days for 21/22, an increase in spend on the last full, unaffected year (2019). A number of reviews are currently underway examining the command and control, status of UOTCs, its staffing and Mission. The Institutional Foundation and Integrated Review impacts on UOTCs are not yet known.*

*{electronically signed}*

*N Cheshire  
Col  
Commander OTC*

**ACTION: Ms C Kinhead asked about reviews noted under paragraph 5 of the report (G8 Finance) – when will the reviews be completed and will the outcomes be documented and shared?**

**ACTION: The Chairman asked about the outcomes and any action from the OFSTED reports and could these be shared by the Army?**

c. Royal Air Force (COMEC\_Exec\_2021\_09\_D3)

20210810 – 6 FTS COMEC Report

18 Aug 21

Comdt 6 FTS  
COMEC Executive

## **COMEC EXECUTIVE MEETING 1 SEP 21 – 6 FTS REPORT**

### **Comdt 6 FTS Overview**

1. *A busy period for 6 FTS with the relaxation of most CVOID-19 restrictions. This has meant that UK based Adventurous Training and Force Development activities have recommenced and we are able to offer a much broader range of face-to-face training activities. There is a gradual return to flying activity as the Grob Tutor recovery programme commences. As part of this safe return to flying this activity will be focussed initially on getting the instructors back up to speed after a protracted period of no flying prior to enabling students to get back into the air.*

### **Recruiting**

2. *As we approach the recruitment freshers' period, there will be a blended approach of attendance at freshers' activities whilst retaining the online recruitment portal and website. Budgetary constraints have meant that we will not be able to support recruiting at as many Freshers events as was previously the case but it is not anticipated that this will have a significant effect on recruitment this year and is to some extent mitigated by the online recruitment portal. Capita medical availability was negatively impacted by Covid and as a result some 2020 recruits will be attested with the 2021 cohort. We are exploring with Capita and our Recruiting and Selection organisation to address these issues so that they do not impact 2021 recruiting. More broadly recruitment opportunities into the RAF have decreased as outflow of personnel has slowed significantly as a Covid effect. At the same time interest in joining the Service remains high. This combined effect has meant that students are facing an increasingly competitive recruitment environment. The UAS has retained access to branches that are closed to Direct Entrants from the public giving our students the best possible chance of being successful. We are seeing an increase in candidates that were unsuccessful at selection enrolling on post graduate degrees before submitting a re-application. 6 FTS has applied more flexibility to support these students and authorised a number of extensions of UAS service in this regard.*

### **UAS Student Population Breakdown**

3. *Of the current student cohort (883 members), 32% are female and 68% male. Of our total number of students, 46.4% are studying a STEM subject of which 21% are female and 79% male. Within the STEM group 73% are studying a subject relating to engineering, with 17% females and 83% males. 14.5% of our total student population are BAME, and 21% of those studying STEM subjects are BAME. For comparison the current RAF diversity targets are 10% BAME and 15% Female.*

### **HQ 6 FTS Armed Forces Career Office**

4. *The HQ 6 FTS Virtual Armed Forces Careers Office continues to operate and process applications from serving UAS students wishing to join the Regular RAF, either*

*via the sponsorship scheme or Direct Entrant routes. To date 340 applications have been received, of which 45 have been awarded bursaries, another 30 still being processed. 27 candidates now have been allocated start dates for Initial Officer Training in late 2021/early 2022, with 61 awaiting medicals of selection confirmation following Officer Aircrew Selection Centre (OASC). 124 candidates have either been rejected or withdrawn, with a good number intending to reapply. This continues to be a good news story for 6 FTS, and we continue to work through the issues and process the applications as quickly as possible. The RAF Sponsorship Board will sit in late September and decide who will be awarded the next allocation of bursaries.*

### ***Modular Initial Officer Training.***

*5. Since the last report and the relaxation of COVID-19 regulations, we have focused on delivering face-to-face training at HQ 6FTS and paused our virtual training delivery, partly to give the students some respite from online activities. The training courses delivered include First Aid, Range & Security training, Induction courses and Fieldcraft and as expected, the courses have been popular, and uptake has been high. In August a cohort of UAS OCdts took part in the annual Acting Pilot Officer Course which is delivered by RAF Officer Training Academy staff. The course was successfully completed by 47 members of the all 15 squadrons across the UK. The training covered a range of leadership tasks and culminated in the participants being awarded a Volunteer Reserve Acting Pilot Officer commission by Commandant RAFC Cranwell. These are the types of activities that add real value to the individual student and translate well into other aspects of their academic life and studies.*

### ***K Thompson***

*K Thompson MA  
SO2 Force Development  
HQ 6 FTS*

- NOTED: Gp Capt I Sharrocks noted focus on delivering training in a safe, memorable, and meaningful way despite the restrictions of the pandemic. Gp Capt I Sharrocks noted development of formal elementary flying training which will allow students to skip an aircraft for training resulting in a significant fast track and reduced holding period.
- NOTED: Gp Capt I Sharrocks noted the RAF will continue the successful online recruitment activity on a continuous basis through the year. He expects to recruit 1000 students this year. BAME numbers in UASs are increasing proportionately compared to those in regular service so challenge is to support BAME student progression. The Chairman asked if there was any disadvantage for students starting later in the academic year or changing study. Gp Capt I Sharrocks noted there is lots of flexibility now built in to accommodate this.
- NOTED: The Vice-Chair noted it was great to see the number of engineers increasing. Gp Capt I Sharrocks noted the success is linked to getting the culture right on squadrons, who have moved on from the drinking club of old to a more inclusive environment.

- NOTED: Capt N Downing noted the RN is watching the RAF very closely and looking to do something similar in terms of training. There is a lot of interlinkage in terms of RAF and RN and sharing good practice. Capt N Downing noted BAME figures in the URNUs are 11%, and gender split is 64% male and 36% female. There are the same issues of progression through into regular forces.
- **ACTION: It was noted it would be useful to add DTUS / DSUS implementation to the November meeting agenda.**

d. Defence People (COMEC\_Exec\_2021\_09\_D4)

## **DEFENCE PEOPLE (RF&C) UPDATE FOR COMEC – SEP 2021**

### **Defence Overview**

1. *The department's priorities are focusing on the immediate challenges posed by living with COVID 19 and ensuring Defence's and HMG's outputs are not adversely affected. The department continues to work on the outcomes from the Spending Review and Integrated Foreign, Defence and Security Review. R&C remains actively engaged regarding any measures that might affect Reserves and Cadets.*

### **Reserves Policy**

2. **Reserve Forces 30 Review.** *The Reserve Forces Review was published in May 2021. Conducted by a small team led by a senior serving reservist and former Minister of Armed Forces, Brigadier The Rt Hon the Lord Lancaster of Kimbolton TD PC. The report follows 10-months of research and engagement and suggests how Defence may build on earlier work under the £1.85-billion Future Reserves 2020 programme.*

a. *RF30 is capability driven and offers 18 recommendations for consideration. It is designed to help inform wider work to establish the UK's future defence and security requirements, taking account of the increasing need to meet emerging risks and threats. It sits alongside the recently published Integrated Review and the Integrated Operating Concept 2025.*

b. *Defence will engage with key stakeholders, including current and future employers of reservists, and other parts of government and industry, to fully understand the implications of the RF30 recommendations and their coherence with wider Defence work before reaching final decisions on the way forward. A formal, detailed response can be expected at the end of the year.*

3. **Use of Reserves.** *As part of the Department's focus on Enterprise Approach we are examining ways that we might make better use of the Reserves. Specifically, the Ex AGILE STANCE campaign will look at the ability to re-build a culture of readiness and re-establish our ability to mobilise reservists at mass and pace. This will require a supporting employer engagement LOD. We are actively considering the lessons arising from COVID 19 and how this and RF30 work shape the future role of Reserve Forces. Through the Defence Plan we are also looking to optimise the use of Reserves and develop better metrics to define the utility of reservists outwith Mobilisation.*

4. **RFCA Reform.** *The new RFCA NDPB structure and operating model is currently under development by RF&C and RFCA representatives, with support from Cabinet Office, HMT, and relevant teams in MOD. Internal MoD programme governance has been established and the intention is for legislative change to be affected through primary legislation to be brought forward in the third session. Good progress has been made on all fronts and the team (now at full complement) will be looking to engage with the wider RFCA network in due course.*

**FR20 (Update info from the latest UK Armed Forces QSPS info)**

5. *The trained strength of the Volunteer Reserves continues to be relatively stable. As at 1 April 2021, the trained strength of the FR20 population was 32,700 (from around 22,000 at the beginning of the Future Reserves Programme), with about 4,700 more in training.*

6. *This is comprised of:*

- a. *Maritime Reserve: 2,870*
- b. *Army Reserve: 26,940*
- c. *RAF Reserve: 2,890*

7. *Reserves from all Services continue to operate in every theatre alongside their Regular counterparts. Some 1,300 reservists are currently called out for permanent service. This reflects the numbers called out as part of the response to the COVID 19 pandemic (which reached approx. 2,300 at its peak) as well as for other operations in the UK and overseas.*

**Employer Engagement**

8. **Overall Assessment.** *We assess that EE has now reached an Operational Pause; FR20 is largely delivered, and largely successful. Preparations must now be made to move to the next phase of employer engagement which is likely to have 3 main sections:*

c. **Retention of the MOD/Employer Relationship.** *Essentially this will require effort to preserve and develop where necessary the work that has already been achieved with FR20 in the 2013-2021 timeframe. Key to this will be ensuring that the work outlined below does not impede or fracture that MoD/employer relationship.*

d. **Support to RF30.** *RF30 represents a new paradigm in EE terms. Both employers and employees/reservists will be asked to do more, often outside agreed or understood tempos and routines. Any campaign to develop or embed even part of RF30 will require a sophisticated EE campaign to ensure understanding and consent on all sides.*

e. **AGILE STANCE Campaign Plan (ASCP).** *As a campaign plan, AGILE STANCE may fundamentally change the way UK prepares, delivers and sustains her Armed Forces in the future. The role of Reserves in ASCP is being developed*



*and will require a strong EE element in support, not least in the work being done to stand up a Strategic Reserve.*

9. **COVID-19.** *We are now looking beyond COVID-19 in EE terms so that lessons identified during the pandemic can be taken into core and utilised for the future. The EE Working Group on 29 Apr 21 began that process, with sS tasked to refine and present lessons identified over the summer for incorporation into a revised DPEES and DPEED. These documents will then be presented to E3G in Nov 21 for endorsement, after which they will be issued. Reserves continue to play a part in the national response to the COVID-19 pandemic, with around 400 still deployed. The response from employers in general has been excellent with very few disputed mobilisations, and most employers keen to help despite their own difficulties given the economic situation. RF&C continue to work in close collaboration with DRM on the planning and execution of Employer Engagement (EE) plans.*

10. **Employer Recognition Scheme.** *The revised ERS Directive was issued in Jan 21 and planning for 4 regional Gold award ceremonies is now underway. Proposals for ERS in NI were considered at the EE Working Group on 29 Apr 21 and may be included in the 2022 Directive if considered sufficiently mature. A review of the Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) was undertaken by RF&C and reported in Dec 20. A number of recommendations have been included in the ERS Directive for 2021 including regional Gold Awards and the inclusion of support to cadet movements as desirable criteria for Gold and Silver awards. Other recommendations will be considered for inclusion in the 2022 Directive including the issue over awards to employers in Northern Ireland. Current numbers are 354 Gold winners, 976 Silver and 3000 Bronze. Of these, there are 14 Gold, 22 + 2 expired ERS Silver (i.e that expired and have not yet been renewed (2014-2017) and 22 Bronze winners in the University sector.*

11. **Anchor Events.** *Reserves Day used online engagement to a much greater degree in order to achieve better coverage with the target audiences. Reserves Day saw a change of tack this year as RF&C with a film celebrating Reserve service to support a central, virtual Ministerial event used in support of regional events. This provided the opportunity to place RD on a proper 'online footing' for the future. The model allows for greater coverage and penetration with target audiences, whilst minimising the inconvenience to reservists themselves, which has in the past been a source of friction.*

12. **CS Reserves Challenge.** *The picture remains positive, with continued progress in the number of Civil Servants joining the Reserves. Civil Servant Reservist (CSR) numbers sit at 1939 as at 1 Jan 21 – this is approximately 0.84% of the estimated eligible total of CS (and 0.49% of the overall total). The Civil Service continues to make up approximately 5.2% of the total Reserves trained strength. The CS Reserves Challenge campaign is due to conclude by 1 Apr 22 with MOD ceasing to be responsible for reporting figures and promoting recruitment.*

*Col Darin Gray VR  
Assistant Head Reserves, Defence People (RF&C)*

- NOTED: Col D Gray noted on the RF30 and implementation plans, that from the last briefing there was a number of recommendations but no cost attached to them. These recommendations included extending reach and use of reserves and links to academia. Once these recommendations are endorsed by the Secretary of State there is an opportunity for COMEC to feedback. It is hoped this will be agreed by Christmas 2021 but it may push back.

## 6. COMEC Prize

- NOTED: The COMEC Prize Winner 2020-21 is APO Sam Baker of University of Birmingham University Air Squadron. The runners up are OCdt Osian Davies of Wales UOTC and OCdt Gerard Murphy of Leeds UOTC.
- NOTED: Ms C Kinkead noted there were 13 entrants and only one CO had linked their nomination report to the prize criteria (this will be discussed at the prize review in November).

## 7. COMEC President

- NOTED: General Sir Peter Wall has agreed to remain in post until September 2022.
- NOTED: The President noted COMEC now has excellent representation however further engagement is needed to the higher echelons of the MoD. The next President needs to be connected at the highest levels and be able to call in support so the Executive needs to think about who may be in this category. It was noted that with the upcoming appointment of the new CDS this may present an opportunity to approach possible candidates.

## 8. Nominations to the Executive Committee

- NOTED: Dr J Smith informed the Executive of her resignation with immediate effect due to constraints on her time and other commitments. However, she will continue to support COMEC outwith the Executive. The Chairman thanked Dr J Smith for her service and support.
- NOTED: Following the resignation of Dr J Smith, there are two vacancies on the Executive following the completion of term of office for Ms Carol Kinkead (eligible for re-election).
- NOTED: Nominations have been received by the due date in respect of the following:

### Executive Committee Member

Ms Carol Kinkead (Queen's Belfast MEC; COMEC\_AGM\_2021\_D1)  
 Dr Gerardine (Gerri) Matthews-Smith (Edinburgh MEC;  
 COMEC\_AGM\_2021\_D2)

- NOTED: There being two nominations received by the due date for two vacancies both Ms Carol Kinkead and Dr Gerardine Matthews-Smith are noted for election at the AGM for a term of four years.

**9. Relations with MECs**

- RECEIVED: An update on COMEC Executive discussions with MEC Chairs.
- **ACTION: The Chairman noted the COMEC / MEC Chairs Forums will continue in 21/22. The Secretary will also copy MEC Secretaries to the invite and request MEC Chairs nominate another MEC member if they are unable to attend. Dates will be set up for the whole year to allow for more notice. The next MEC Forum will be chaired by Professor M Siva-Jothy and focus on the MEC Terms of Reference.**

**10. Any Other Business:**

- NOTED: The President thanked all those contributing to COMEC and MECs activities, including the conference, recognising many are doing this on a voluntary basis.

**11. Dates and Venues of Future Meetings:**

- APPROVED: The dates and venues of future meetings subject to pandemic restrictions:
  - Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2021 (ULOTC, London)
  - Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> February 2022 (Virtual Microsoft Teams Meeting)
  - Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2022 (ULOTC, London)
  - September 2022 AGM & Conference (Army)